

Report compiled for the Ministry of Information,
Ministry of National Heritage and Culture,
the British Embassy and the British Council,
Muscat.

A REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE DHOFAR EPIGRAPHIC PROJECT

1412/1992

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THE DHOFAR EPIGRAPHIC PROJECT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Dhofar Epigraphic Project was started in 1991 to record the inscriptions found by Mr Ali Ahmad Mahash in the Southern Region and to work on their decipherment.

The second season of the Project lasted from 30/3/1992 until 31/5/1992. During this period the project was transferred from the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture to the National Committee for the Supervision of Archaeology in the Southern Region within the Ministry of Information. The Project would like to thank the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture for its initial sponsorship and help, and for providing excellent accommodation in Salalah for the whole period. We are extremely grateful to the Ministry of Information for its subsequent sponsorship and assistance. The Works Department of the Office of the Governor of Dhofar provided us with a 4 wheel drive vehicle and we are very grateful to them. The inscriptions were originally found by Mr Ali Ahmad Mahash of the National Committee for the Supervision of Archaeology in the Southern Region. We would like to thank him for his generosity in showing us the inscriptions and for all his administrative help. The majority of our work would not have been possible without the help of guides. We would like to thank Mr Ali Saeed Musthail and Saeed Mohammad Mubarak for working so hard and enabling us to see so much. Mr Fridtjof Eykendun copied the inscriptions and did the survey work and Dr Geraldine King took the photographs. The project was partly financed by the British Government, the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust to whom we express our gratitude.

2. THE WORK OF THE PROJECT

The work of the project was divided into 3 aspects:

(1) Recording the inscriptions found by Mr Mahash.

Most of the inscriptions found by Mr Mahash are written in caves in the Jebel north of Salalah in an area stretching roughly between Teetam and Tawi Atayr (see Pl. 1 for a general map of the areas worked in). In 1991, 32 sites (caves or areas with inscribed rocks) were recorded and over the last 8 weeks the project has visited a further 58 caves, bringing the total number of sites to 90. From these, approximately 800 inscriptions have been copied and photographed.

(2) Re-photographing inscriptions recorded in 1991.

The fieldwork in 1991 was undertaken during the monsoon and some of the photographs were not satisfactory because of the bad light. During this season the project revisited 15 of

these sites to re-photograph material.

(3) Searching the western Jebel (al-gharbiyah) and western desert areas for new sites with inscriptions.

One of the aims of the project this season was to gain an idea of the extent of the distribution of the inscriptions and to continue the search for texts which would help with their decipherment. The project spent several days in the western Jebel (al-gharbiyah) and the Negd and desert areas. In the west, the project worked from various points to the south of the road between Agdorot and a few kilometres west of Mazahoob. In general, the western Jebel tends to be more difficult terrain in which to search for inscriptions. The hills, on the whole, are more heavily wooded and many of the wadis, steep-sided and narrow. Furthermore, there are fewer tracks making access difficult. In searching this region, suitable well-defined areas were chosen and the caves systematically investigated. 7 caves with inscriptions were located and 3 with drawings alone. 70 new inscriptions were recorded.

A few days were spent investigating the Negd and desert regions in selected areas to the south of Hayroon and to the west of Thamrait. There is a great variety of limestone deserts in these areas but, on the whole, the rock is degraded and rough, and suitable surfaces for inscribing are few and widely scattered. The search for inscriptions in these regions requires driving long distances in remote areas. During this period we were shown 2 sites near a waterhole with a total of 9 inscriptions.

3. THE CAVES

The inscriptions have been found in a great variety of caves, all of which have been used at some point as either a temporary or permanent shelter (see Pl. 2 for examples of the types of caves). All the caves are fairly shallow but sufficiently deep to provide protection from the sun, wind or rain and all have good floor surfaces. Some of the biggest caves are over 100 metres in length with ceilings of up to 15 metres high. One of the smallest caves visited by the project had a length of about 4 metres and a height of 1 metre. The caves are situated in the slopes of different types of wadis, those with wide passable bottoms as well as steep narrow ones, although probably the majority of the caves seen by the project occur in or within the vicinity of the former type. They are located at different levels of the slopes, the caves at the top often being approached from above, as indicated by the well-trodden tracks leading to them.

In the western area it was obviously important to concentrate on caves where it was most likely inscriptions would be found. The project, therefore, did not investigate very shallow caves with little floor surface which are

unlikely to have been used for habitation. Similarly, caves with eroded, brittle surfaces or those with surfaces blackened by water were not searched. Whilst it is possible inscriptions were written in these caves, it is most likely they have been damaged or destroyed by weathering.

The distribution of the inscribed caves, on the whole, suggests that inscriptions were written by local people and not by travellers passing through the area.

4. RECORDING THE INSCRIPTIONS

The project was able to record the inscriptions from between 1 and 5 caves a day depending on how easy it was to reach a site and the number of inscriptions found there.

Many of the inscriptions are faint and fragmentary (see, for example, the worn inscriptions shown in Pl. 3). It requires a skilled eye to find them, and sometimes takes a long time to obtain an accurate reading. Recording and photographing the inscriptions from a cave can take as long as 4 or 5 hours. Each inscription was copied and a sketch was made of their relative positions. They were then photographed in black and white and colour slides with detailed pictures of difficult readings. Each picture was taken with a 10 cm scale to give an indication of the size of the letters. The light levels in some of the caves are fairly low. With flash photography there is a tendency for details to be lost and so most of the photography was done at low speeds using a tripod. The approximate dimensions of the cave were recorded and the direction in which it faced. Each cave was located on a map.

5. THE INSCRIPTIONS

In some caves the project recorded only one inscription and in others as many as 40, probably only a small proportion of those that originally existed, the rest having been damaged by subsequent erosion and habitation.

The inscriptions are written on the walls of the caves, sometimes on uneven surfaces or in small hollows, and on the ceilings. Sometimes they are written in places which are several metres high which suggests that there might have been wooden structures in the caves enabling the authors to reach them. The inscriptions are not always written in the same area of a cave but often are found scattered around.

The inscriptions found in caves are painted in black, red and, less frequently, a brownish pigment. Only two inscriptions that had been cut into the rock were found in caves and one very lightly scratched text. On the other hand, in the Negd and desert areas all the inscriptions that have been found are hammered on to the rock (see the examples in Pl. 8). This might be an 'accident' of the material that has

been found or it might be because the pigments have been eroded in the harsher more exposed environment or because the pigment is not available there and was not carried into the area.

During this season's work, it has become apparent that there are inscriptions written in 2 types of script. In addition, one inscription in the formal Early South Arabian script (ESA) has been found. For the purpose of this report, I shall call the 2 scripts Dhofar script 1 and Dhofar script 2. Examples of the former can be seen in Pls. 3 - 8 and of the latter in Pls. 9 - 10a. Plate 10b gives an example of inscriptions in both scripts written close together. It is most likely that the inscription in Dhofar Script 2 was written after the one in Dhofar Script 1.

By far the most numerous are the inscriptions in Dhofar Script 1. Of the 90 sites seen by the project in the eastern Jebel, only 10 contain inscriptions in Dhofar Script 2, whilst in the west, 7 out of the 9 sites found had them. The greater proportion in the latter region does not necessarily suggest that the inscriptions are more common in that area as, at the moment, only a very small area has been searched in comparison with the rest of the Jebel.

The inscriptions still defy satisfactory translation and further analysis with reference books and dictionaries will have to be undertaken in Britain. It is clear that both scripts are forms of the South Semitic script which was used in the Early South Arabian inscriptions as well as in a variety of other Pre-Islamic inscriptions which have been found in the Arabian Peninsular. It is likely they were written about 2000 years ago but, at the moment, there is no evidence for this. Below there are tables of the letter forms and a discussion of the scripts, a few more general points about the inscriptions can be made here.

The inscriptions in Dhofar Script 1 are written either vertically or diagonally downwards, although in some cases, where the rock in those directions becomes rough, the inscription is finished on a horizontal plane (reading either left to right or right to left) using a smoother surface.

There are no word-dividers in this script. Many of the inscriptions are written in columns next to each other, some consisting of only 3 or 4 letters. Examples of such groups are shown in Pls. 4 and 5. The brevity of some of these texts suggest that they are names or a series of names written by a group of people, probably all at one time. There is evidence that some inscriptions are continued in an adjacent column either on the left or the right, rather than being written in a continuous line.

Sometimes there is a handprint to one side of the inscriptions, see the examples in Pls. 5a and 6b.

A few instances have been found where the inscriptions are surrounded by a line, an example is shown in Pl. 6a where the cartouche has been decorated with loops.

Pl. 6b shows one of a few instances where an inscription has been repeated. The author has written the text once in neat well-defined letters and once in a careless and untidy hand.

Some of the longer texts that have been found are shown in Pls. 7a and b. Comments on the content of these, and indeed all the material found, are largely speculative at this stage, but I suggest we shall find that they consist of names, genealogies, brief statements of activities and perhaps prayers.

The inscriptions in Dhofar script 2 are written in horizontal lines, either from right to left or from left to right. There is quite frequent use of word-dividers, in the form of a line, a feature that occurs in the Early South Arabian inscriptions.

6. THE SCRIPTS

Fig. 1 gives a table of the letters of the Early South Arabian script and transliterations into Arabic and English. It includes as well the scripts of 2 types of informal inscriptions, Safaitic found in the basalt desert (the Ḥarrah) of northeastern Jordan and Thamudic E found in the sandstone desert (the Ḥisma) in southern Jordan and western Saudi Arabia. These scripts, being geographically remote, are not necessarily relevant to those that have been found in Oman but are shown here to give an idea of the differences in letter forms that occur in the various Pre-Islamic South Semitic scripts that have been found elsewhere.

Figs. 2 to 5 list letter forms that have been found in Dhofar Script 1. Each letter has been traced from a photograph, though they are not all drawn to the same scale. The letters read either vertically or diagonally downwards, unless an arrow by the side indicates that it should be read in a horizontal direction. Each line lists the various forms of a letter or which, at this stage, I have assumed to be the same letter. The number of examples given does not necessarily indicate the frequency with which a letter occurs but is a reflection of the variety of forms that have been found.

The table contains 46 different letter forms, a number that greatly exceeds the 29 phonemes in Early South Arabian. It is certain that the list can be reduced, the additional letters occurring at this stage because I have not been able to identify different shapes that have the same phonemic value. That different letter forms sometimes occur in the informal scripts can be seen from the Safaitic and Thamudic E

Early South Arabian, Safaitic and Thamudic E Alphabets

Arabic & English	Early South Arabian E S A		Safaitic		Thamudic E
ا ب	ا		ا		ا ا
ب ب	ب		ب		ب ب
ت ت	ت		ت		ت
ث ت	ث		ث		ث
ج ج	ج		ج		ج
ح ح	ح		ح		ح ح
خ ح	خ		خ		خ
د د	د		د		د د
ذ د	ذ		ذ		ذ ذ
ر ر	ر		ر		ر
ز ز	ز		ز		ز
س س	س		س		س س
ش ش	ش		ش		ش ش
ص ص	ص		ص		ص
ض ض	ض		ض		ض ض
ط ط	ط		ط		ط
ظ ظ	ظ		ظ		ظ ظ
ع ع	ع		ع		ع ع
غ غ	غ		غ		غ
ف ف	ف		ف		ف ف
ق ق	ق		ق		ق ق
ك ك	ك		ك		ك ك
ل ل	ل		ل		ل ل
م م	م		م		م م
ن ن	ن		ن		ن
ه ه	ه		ه		ه ه
و و	و		و		و
ي ي	ي		ي		ي

Figure 1

alphabets in Fig. 1 In Safaitic, for example, 'c' is represented by either a circle or a dot and 'g' by either a line with a slight zig-zag at one end or by parallel wavy lines. In Thamudic E there are clearly different forms of 'd', 'š' and 'k'.

1. There is evidence that this letter represents 'b'. It occurs in the element 'b', Ar. 'ab', 'father', in a compound name and also in the theophoric element 'l', the primitive Semitic deity $\bar{e}l$ which is well-attested as an element in Early South Arabian names. There is also evidence of an 'fcl' form in which the letter is followed by 3 radicals.

2. This letter I would read as 'b'. It occurs in the element 'b' as mentioned in 1 above. There are also instances where the letter occurs followed by a dot (letter no. 28) in positions where it would be appropriate to translate the combination as 'son of'. An example occurs in the first column of Pl. 4a where the combination is preceded and followed by three letters, suggesting the text should be translated, 'fulān bīn fulān', 'so-and-so son of so-and-so'. Another example occurs in Pl. 4b, where the patronym (the penultimate column on the right) has been written to the left of the author's name. In Pl. 7a, letter no. 11 followed by a dot, is repeated 3 times suggesting the author has written an extended genealogy 'fulān bīn fulān bīn fulān bīn fulān'. If this is a correct rendering, some of the forms listed under letter no. 11 would have the value 'b'.

3.

4. A cross representing 't' is fairly constant in the South Semitic scripts and it is likely that it has that value here.

5.

6. There is evidence from repeated sequences that the types of this letter both with and without a tail have the same value. The most likely interpretation of this letter, on the basis of known scripts, is 'h', although there is a problem with this evaluation as the letter is quite often followed by a circle (letter no. 21) which, again on the basis of the known scripts, might be 'c'. This would produce an impossible combination 'hc'. If the letter is to be read 'h', it seems to me the root 'hyy/hyw' (this letter followed by letter nos. 29 and 30) meaning 'live' occurs in the top left of Pl. 4b, another example occurs in Pl. 6b.

7. I have found very few examples of this letter form which is strange given that in other scripts it represents 'd', a phoneme one would expect to be common. There is evidence that some of the examples listed here should be read as ill-formed versions of letter no. 24, with the spine pushed to the side rather than occurring in a central position.



Figure 2

8. It is possible that these should be subsumed under no. 2, being examples of the letter written in a different direction. The shallowness of some of the curves, however, suggests to me that at least some of them might have a different value.
9. There is evidence that this letter is written in a variety of directions. Compare, for instance, the right most line in Pl. 5a with the third line from the left in Pl. 5b where it seems to me we have the same sequence of letters. In the first example, the vertical line occurs upwards and in the second, it occurs downwards.
- 10.
11. See letter no. 2 above, where it is suggested that some of these letter forms might have the value 'b'.
- 12.
13. On the basis of other scripts, I would suggest this letter has the value 'š'. There is a certain amount of evidence to suggest that this and letter no. 14 have the same value.
14. See letter no. 13.
- 15 - 18.
19. This is a doubtful reading.
20. There is evidence that this letter has the same value as no. 21. It should be noted that when the pigment is worn, it is easy to mistake what is the remains of a cross-bar of letter no. 29 for the dot of this letter.
21. See letter no. 20.
22. There are some examples of slightly rectangular letters.
23. It is possible that the last example does not belong here.
24. The shape of the letter representing 'q' remains fairly constant throughout the South Semitic scripts and I would suggest it has that value here.
25. It seems to me that these are all forms which could be related to ESA 'k'. See under letter no. 43.
26. There is evidence that this letter is 'l' from its occurrence in the theophoric element 'ēl', see under letter no. 1. It occurs at the beginning of some texts which suggests it has the meaning of Ar. 'li' followed by a personal name, and that the inscription should be rendered 'li fulān' 'By or for so-and-so'. I have found no conclusive evidence to suggest that, where the hook is horizontal, (see the last 2 examples), the

13.



14.



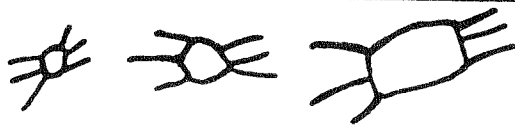
15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.



21.



22.



23.



24.



Figure 3

letter should be interpreted as 'g' as is the case in earlier ESA inscriptions.

27. These letter forms resemble 'm' in other scripts. These are the only examples I have found which suggests the letter is rare. It is possible that the first 2 examples listed here are forms of letter no. 5 where the middle line has been reduced.

28. See under letter no. 2, for the suggestion that this letter preceded by letter no. 2 should be translated 'son of'. If this is correct, the letter would be either 'n' and the word translated, as in Arabic, 'ibn' or 'r', and the word translated as 'bar', as in the Aramaic languages.

29. The examples with one cross-bar are similar to the letter form for 'w' in other scripts and I would suggest it has the same value here. The identification of the examples with a cross in the middle is less certain. I have found no evidence to suggest that the more rectangular form (the last 2 letters) should be interpreted as either 'd' or 't' on the basis of those letters in ESA.

30. On the basis of other scripts it is most likely that this letter should be interpreted as 'y'.

31. There are several other examples of a letter formed from 2 circles written side by side. The penultimate example given here might be an example of this where the circles have been written so close to each other that the lines have joined. The last example, where the circles occur one after the other, might be this letter written in a different direction or might be 2 instances of letter no. 21 following on from each other.

32. I have found no evidence to suggest that this letter is a squared version of letter no. 6. The penultimate example has been written with the spine vertical and the prongs at a slant (compare similar examples in letter no. 33). The last example might be another instance of this except it has a slight tail.

33. There are examples of this letter with 4 prongs and I have found one instance where there are five prongs and one instance where there are 4 prongs and a tail. The 2 final examples have been written with vertical spines similar in stance to the penultimate letter under no. 32.

34 - 35. Both vertical and horizontal lines occur. I have found no evidence to suggest that either type line is used as a word divider.

36. 2 parallel lines. In some cases one of the lines is shorter than the other. Most of the examples of this letter are writtten vertically, although there are a few examples where they occur horizontally. It is of course possible that these last instances are consecutive examples of letter no. 35.

25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	
36	

Figure 4

37. 3 parallel lines, which, on the whole, are written vertically. I have found 1 instance where there appears to be 4 lines.
- 38.
39. This letter might be a version of letter no. 10 with the cross strokes placed diagonally.
40. There are examples of this letter in Pl. 6b. The curve is too deep to suggest that they are instances of letter no. 2 written with a different stance.
41. It is possible that these are versions of letter no. 42. Equally, they might be examples of the first letter form listed under letter no. 25, with the spine vertical and lines drawn diagonally. Compare the stances of the final letter forms under nos. 32 and 33.
42. See under letter no. 41.
43. These might be examples of the first form of letter no. 25 written with the lines facing upwards rather than down.
44. It is possible these are variations of letter form no. 1 with the curve reduced to a line. Compare the last example under no. 1 where the curve is very slight.
45. There is an example of this letter form in Pl. 4b. It might be an instance of letter no. 3 with a line added or a monogramme, perhaps, a combination of letter no. 2 and letter no. 4.
46. I have found only one example of this letter.

37.

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38.

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39.

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40.

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41.

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43.

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44.

⤵ ⤵

45.

⊕

46.

⊕

Figure 5

Dhofar Script 2

As with Dhofar Script 1, the number of the letter forms identified exceeds the 29 phonemes found in ESA, although the increase is much smaller. The script bears a greater resemblance to the ESA script whilst at the same time containing letter forms that do not occur there but that are found in Dhofar Script 1 (see, for instance, letter nos. 21 - 23 and 25 - 27). It is possible that the identification of the value of these letters in this script will be easier and might also provide a significant step forward in the decipherment of the more enigmatic Dhofar Script 1.

1. ʾ , compare letter no. 1 in Dhofar Script 1.
2. Compare ESA 'b'.
3. Compare ESA 't'.
4. Compare ESA 'ṭ'.
5. Compare ESA 'h'. The letter is written with a different stance.
6. Compare ESA 'd'.
7. Compare ESA 's'.
8. Compare ESA 'ʋ'. The letter is written horizontally rather than vertically.
9. Compare ESA 'ḍ'.
10. Compare ESA 'c'.
11. Compare ESA 'f'.
12. Compare ESA 'q'.
13. Compare ESA 'k'.
14. Compare ESA 'l'.
15. This letter form is similar to ESA 'z' with a different stance. However it occurs frequently at the end of words (see the examples in Pl. 9a - b) which suggests it might be 'm' representing mimation as found in ESA.
16. Compare ESA 'm'.
17. Compare ESA 'n'.
18. Compare ESA 'h', it is written with a different stance.
19. Compare ESA 'w'.





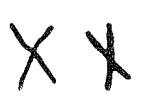




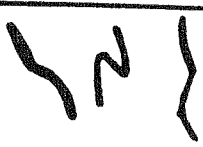














1.		13.	
2.		14.	
3.		15.	
4.		16.	
5.		17.	
6.		18.	
7.		19.	
8.		20.	
9.		21.	
10.		22.	
11.		23.	
12.		24.	

Figure 6

20. Compare ESA 'y'.
21. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 3.
22. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 42.
23. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 10.
- 24.
25. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 32.
26. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 37.
27. Compare Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 38.
28. I think it is most likely that this is a version of letter no. 17, rather than a version of letter no. 8 or Dhofar Script 1, letter no. 13.
- 29 - 31.








25.	
26.	
27.	
28.	
29.	
30.	
31.	

Figure 7

7. PUBLICATION PLANS

A great deal has been achieved by the project over the last few weeks. A large corpus of inscriptions has been recorded and it has been possible to obtain clear readings of the letter forms. The next stage of the project's work will consist of the following: Over 2500 photographs have been taken, these will have to be printed, sorted and catalogued. All the inscriptions will have to be traced from the photographs to produce accurate facsimiles. Work on the decipherment of the script will continue and the inscriptions will be entered on to a data base program and sorted and indexed.

It is intended that within a few months a preliminary report will be completed for publication. This will contain a description of the fieldwork and a report on the progress made on deciphering the texts accompanied by script tables.

In the longer term, work will continue on the preparation of the inscriptions for publication. This will contain an edition of the texts with linguist discussions and indexes of names and vocabulary. Facsimiles and photographs of the inscriptions will be published as well. The publication will be under the names of Mr Ali Ahmad Mahash and Dr Geraldine King and will fully acknowledge the Ministry of Information and the National Committee for the Supervision of Archaeology in the Southern Region and other bodies that have provided assistance.

8. FUTURE FIELDWORK

This season the project has recorded most of the inscriptions found by Mr Mahash. It is hoped that the National Committee for the Supervision of Archaeology in the Southern Region will continue to search for inscriptions and will extend its work to the western Jebel and the desert areas.

In the event of a further season of fieldwork being undertaken by the Dhofar Epigraphic Project, the following assistance would be requested from the Ministry of Information:

1. The arrangement of the NOC for Dr Geraldine King and an assistant.
2. Airfares London-Salalah-London for Dr Geraldine King and an assistant.
3. Accommodation, food and the use of a 4 wheel drive vehicle for the whole period. For work in remote areas it would be necessary to have two 4 wheel drive vehicles as a safeguard against breakdowns.
4. The provision of the necessary maps.
5. 1 airfare Salalah-London-Salalah for Mr Mahash to attend consultations in Britain over the publication.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TRAINING OF STAFF TO WORK IN EPIGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN REGION

The inscriptions found by Mr Mahash and recorded by the project are an extremely important aspect of Omani heritage and it is likely they represent only a small proportion of the epigraphic material to be found in the Southern Region. It is important at this stage that the National Committee starts making plans for training Omani staff to carry out the work of recording and publishing them.

Some general remarks should be made about the personal qualities required by people undertaking research of this kind. On the academic level, the most difficult aspect of the work involves long hours of recording, sorting and cataloguing material and preparing it for publication. It entails many hours of solitary work and requires patience and dedication. Someone who expects immediate results would not be suitable.

This type of research often involves working in remote areas under difficult conditions. Candidates should be physically fit and prepared to work outside in high temperatures and strong winds.

Epigraphists

Candidates should be qualified to MA degree level and, eventually, to PhD level. The candidates should speak Jibbali and have a good knowledge of Arabic. They should have good linguistic abilities as study will necessitate the use of English, French and German and will require a grounding in other Semitic languages. They should have an interest in history and archaeology. For recording the inscriptions they must have an eye for detail and be able to draw accurate copies. The candidates should be prepared to undertake a course in photography as it is important that working photographs, at least, are taken by the person who is reading and interpreting the inscriptions.

Archivist and Librarian

Fieldwork will generate a large amount of information and photographs which should be card indexed and catalogued in a central office. Someone should be trained to set up and keep these records.

The National Committee should start building up a library of relevant publications and reference books. Someone should be trained in librarianship so that he is familiar with the needs and running of a library.

Photographer

It is important that the National Committee has its own photographic laboratory. Someone should be trained in photography including developing and printing techniques.

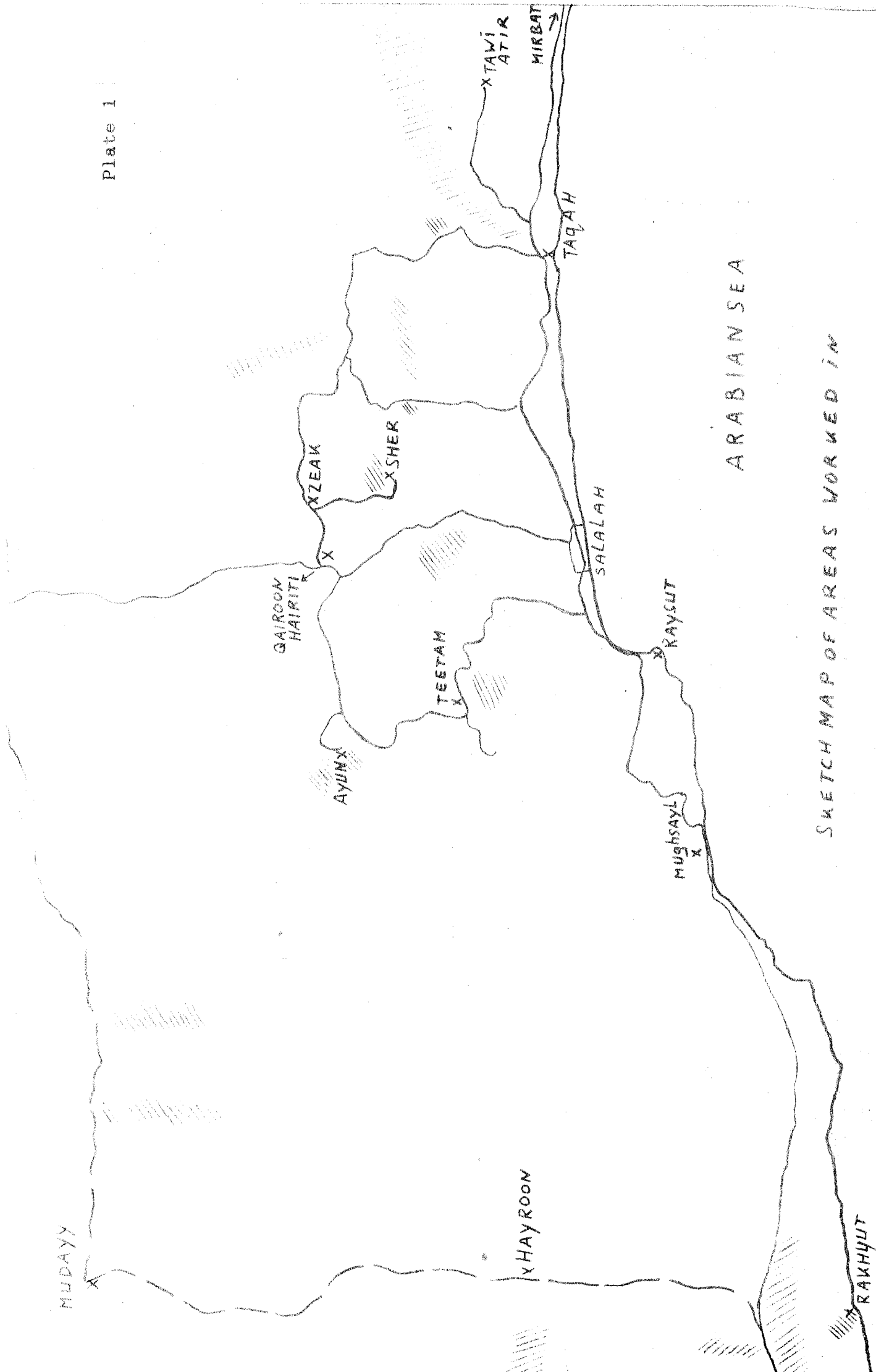
Surveyor

There should be staff trained in the use of maps and

surveying techniques so that the National Committee can produce plans of the sites.

Fieldstaff

People who know different areas of the Southern Region well should be selected to act as guides and to help with searching for inscriptions.



SKETCH MAP OF AREAS WORKED IN



Plate 2a



Plate 2b



Plate 3a



Plate 3b

↑ upside
↓ down

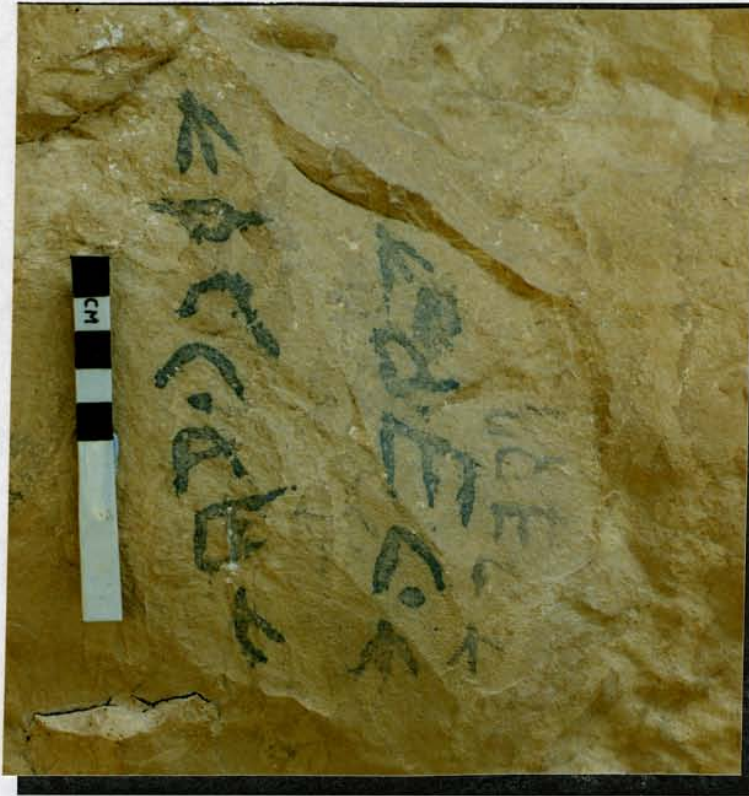


Plate 4a

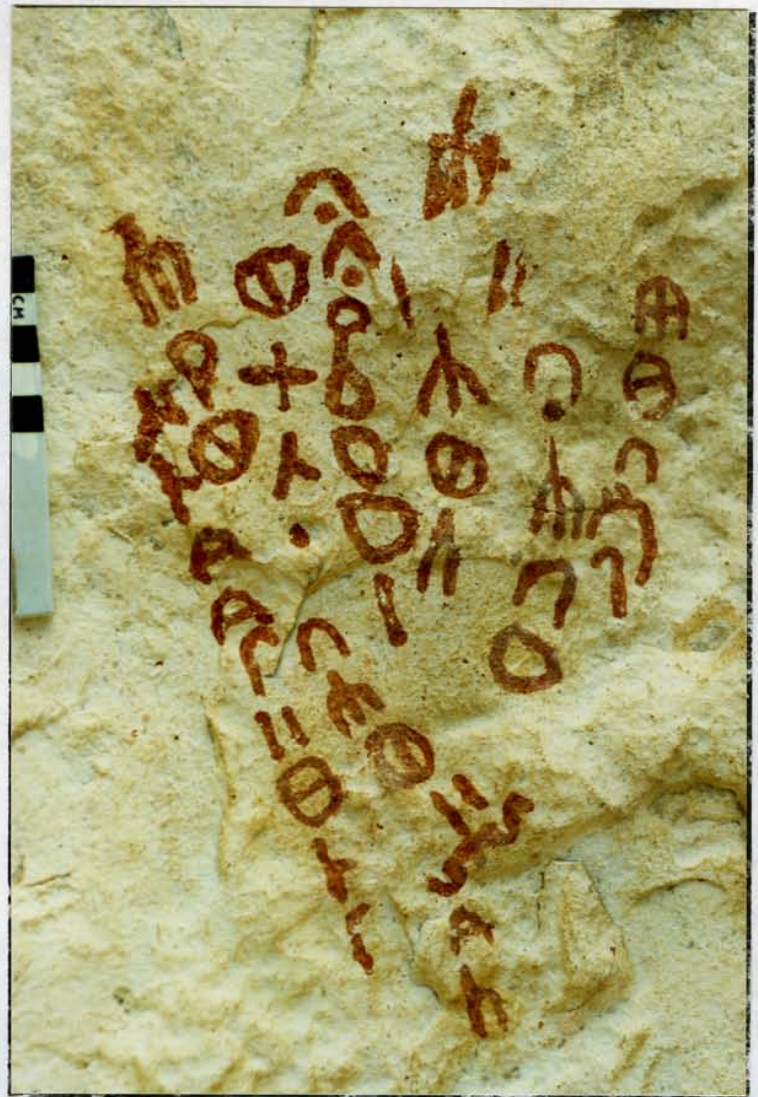


Plate 4b



Plate 5a

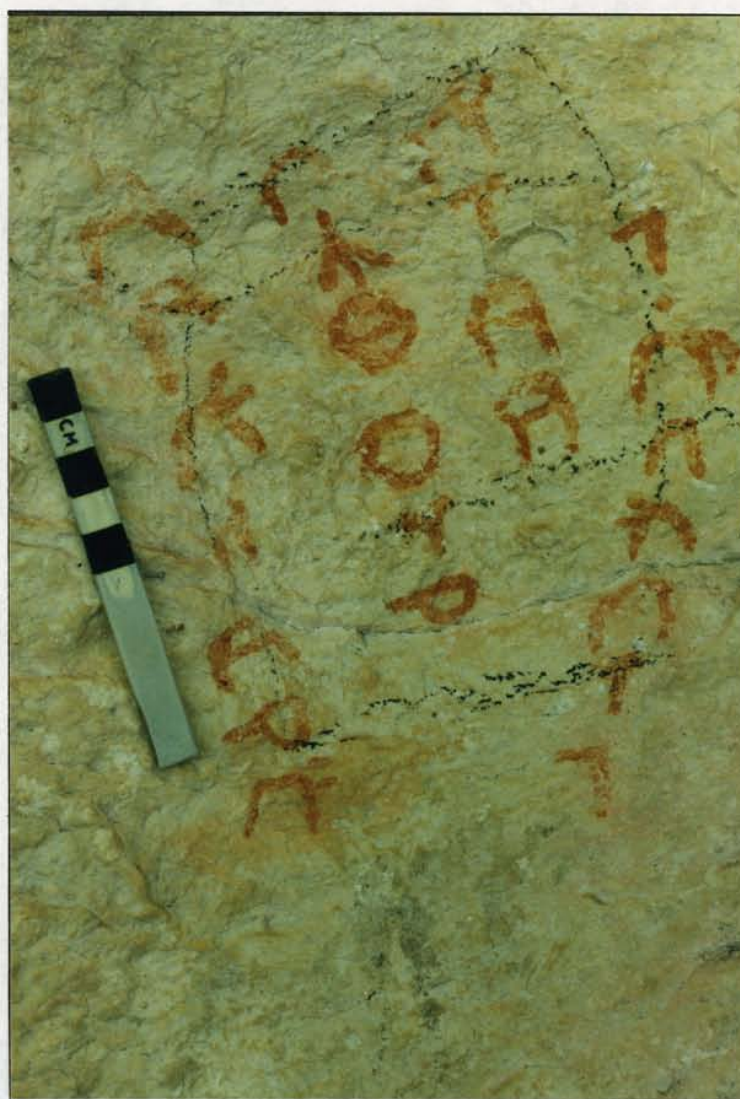


Plate 5b



Plate 6a



Plate 6b



Plate 7a

Plate 7b

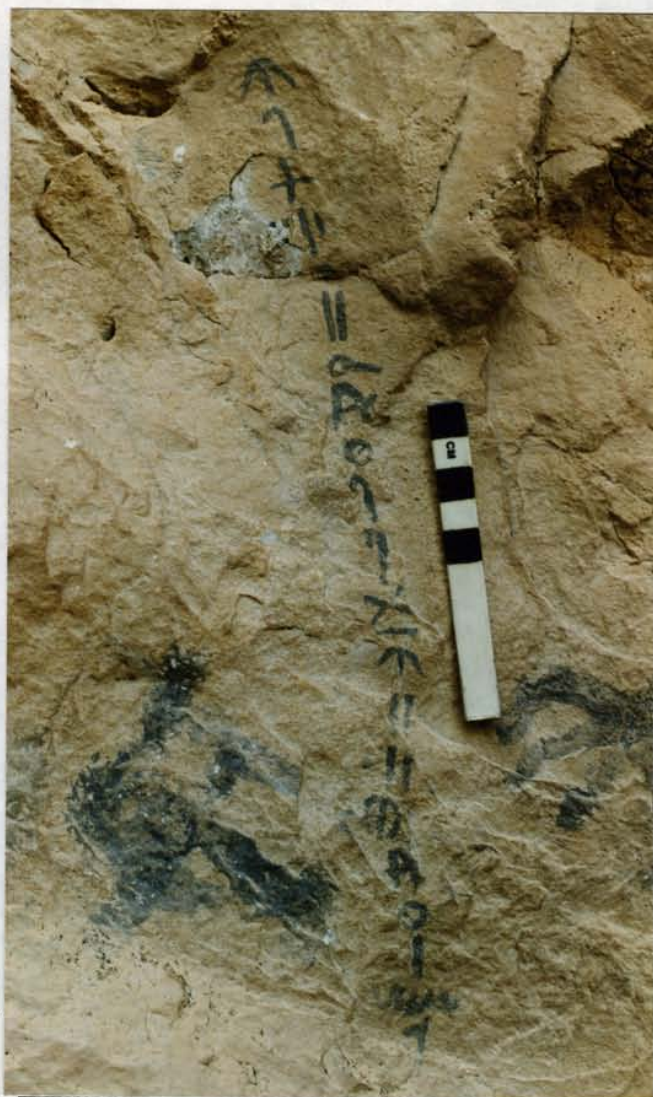




Plate 8a



Plate 8b

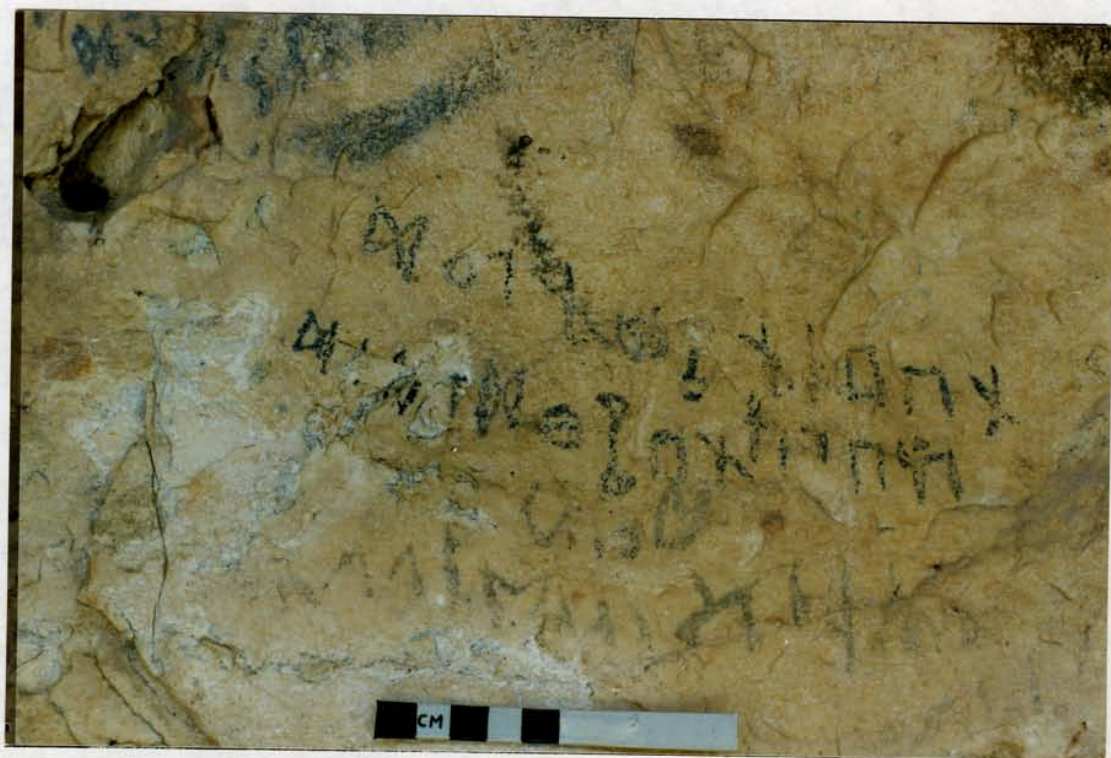


Plate 9a

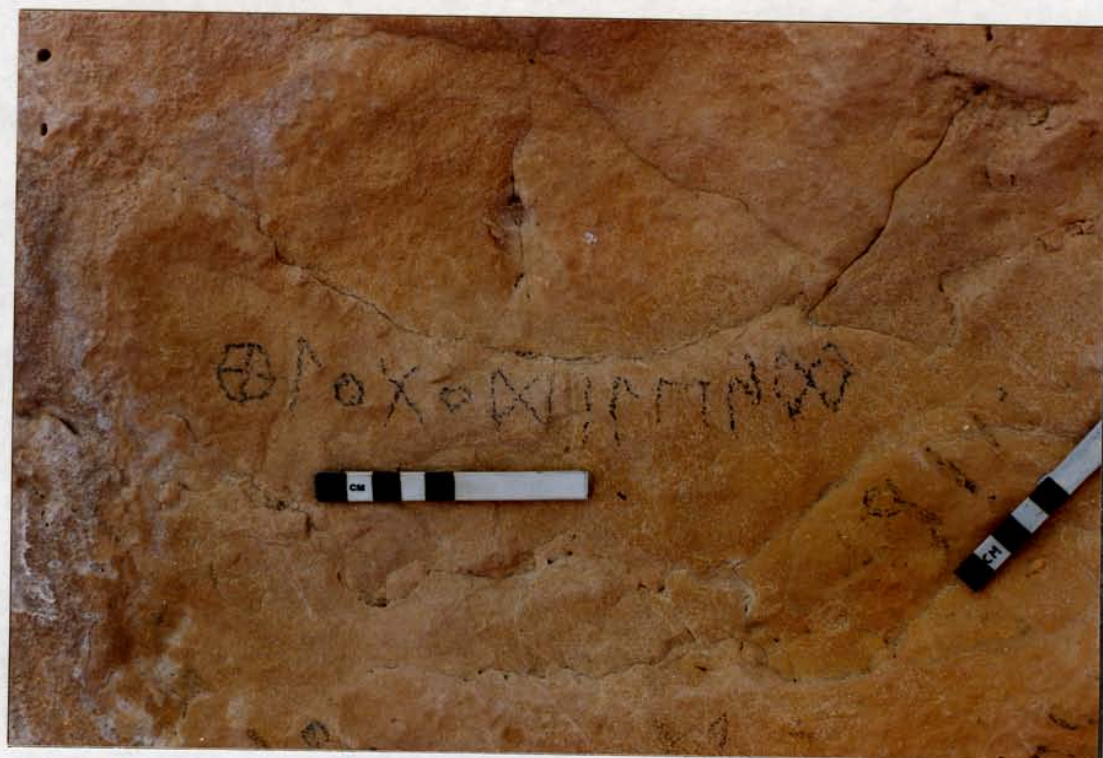


Plate 9b



Plate 10a

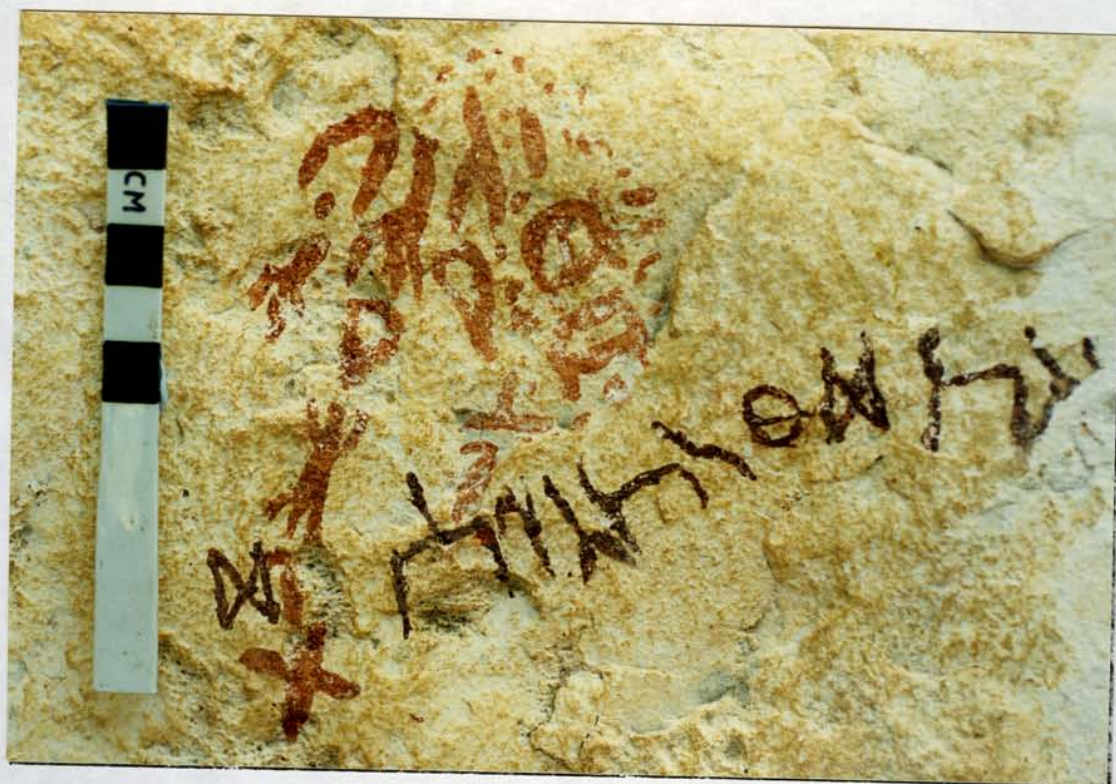


Plate 10b

مشروع اكتشاف النقوش في ظفار

١٩٩٢/١٤١٢

الدكتورة جبر الدين كينج

مشروع اكتشاف النقوش في ظفار

١- مقدمة

بدأ مشروع اكتشاف النقوش في ظفار عام ١٩٩١ لتسجيل النقوش التي اكتشفها الفاضل علي بن أحمد بن محاش في محافظة ظفار والعمل على فك النقوش .

استمرت المرحلة الثانية من المشروع من تاريخ ١٩٩٢/٣/٣٠ ولغاية ١٩٩٢/٥/٣١ . وخلال هذه المرحلة تم نقل المشروع من وزارة التراث القومي والثقافة الى اللجنة الوطنية للإشراف على مسح الأثار في السلطنة التابعة لوزارة الاعلام الموقرة .

ويتشرف فريق المشروع ان يتقدم بالشكر لوزارة التراث القومي والثقافة لرعايتها الكريمة ومساعدتها وتوفير السكن للفريق في ملاحة طوال مدة المشروع كما اننا نسجل شكرنا العميق لوزارة الاعلام الموقرة لتوليها رعاية المشروع ومساعدته . فقد تفضلت المديرية العامة للمشاريع والاشغال في مكتب معالي وزير الدولة ومحافظ ظفار مشكورة بتوفير سيارة ذات دفع اربع عجلات واننا نشكرهم على ذلك .

تم اكتشاف هذه النقوش املاء من قبل الفاضل علي بن أحمد بن محاش من اللجنة الوطنية للإشراف على مسح الأثار في السلطنة ونرجو بهذه المناسبة ان نسجل شكرنا له لتكريمه باطلاعنا على النقوش ولكل ما قدمه لنا من مساعدة ادارية . اما معظم اعمالنا فما كانت لتتم دون مساعدة الادلاء الذين رافقونا

كما نرجو ان نشكر الفاضل علي بن سعيد مستهيل وسعيد بن محمد مبارك على عملهم الدؤوب والذي مكننا من رؤية الكثير من هذه النقوش ، وقام الفاضل فريدتجوف ايكندايين بنسخ النقوش وقام باعمال المسح كما قامت الدكتورة جيراالدين كينج بالانقاط المور وقد تم تمويل المشروع جزئيا من قبل الحكومة البريطانية والاكاديمية البريطانية وصندوق ليفرهيلم والذين لا يسعنا الا ان نتقدم بالشكر لهم ولرعايتهم .

٢- عمل المشروع

تم تقسيم العمل في المشروع في هذه المرحلة الى ثلاثة مجالات كما يلي :

١- تسجيل النقوش التي اكتشفها الفاضل علي بن أحمد محاش .
ان معظم النقوش التي اكتشفها الفاضل علي بن أحمد محاش مكتوبة في الكهوف في الجبل شمال مدينة صلالة في منطقة تمتد تقريبا من طيطم وطوي اعتبار (انظر الشكل الخاص بالخارطة العامة للمناطق التي تم فيها العمل)

في عام ١٩٩١ تم تسجيل ٣٢ موقعا (كهوف أو مناطق بها صخور منقوشة) وخلال الثمانية اسابيع الماضية زار فريق المشروع ثمانية وخمسين كهفا آخر فاصبح مجموع عدد المواقع ٩٠ موقعا ومن تلك المواقع تم نسخ وتصوير حوالي ٨٠٠ نقش .

٢- اعادة تصوير النقوش التي تم تسجيلها عام ١٩٩١ .

٣- البحث في مناطق الجبل الغربي والمصحاء الغربية عن مواقع جديدة للنقوش .

كان احد اهداف المشروع في هذه المرحلة هو تكوين فكرة عن مدى انتشار النقوش والاستمرار في البحث عن نصوص قد تساعد في حلها وامضى فريق المشروع عدة ايام في مناطق الجبل الغربي ونجد والصحراء وفي الغرب عمل فريق المشروع من عدة مناطق الى جنوب الطريق بين اجدروت وبضعة كيلو مترات غرب مذهب .

وقد تم العثور على ٧ كهوف تحتوي على النقوش وكانت سبعة منها تحتوي على رسوم فقط وبذلك تم تسجيل ٧٠ نقشا جديداً . كما تم قضاء عدة ايام في البحث في نجد والمناطق الصحراوية في مناطق مختارة جنوب حيرون وغرب ثمريت، وخلال تلك الفترة اطلعنا على موقعين بالقرب من منخفض تتجمع فيه المياه وكان يوجد به ما مجموعه ٩ نقوش .

٣- الكهوف :

لقد تم العثور على النقوش في الجبل في كهوف مختلفة وكانت جميعها تستعمل في وقت من الاوقات اما كماوى مؤقت أو دائم . (انظر الشكل ٢ للامثلة على انواع الكهوف) . ان جميع الكهوف غير عميقة نوعاً ما الا انها كافية لتوفير حماية من الشمس او الريح او المطر ولها جميعها سطح ارضية جيد ان انتشار الكهوف التي تحتوي على نقوش بشكل عام يدل على انه تمت كتابة النقوش من قبل السكان المحليين وليس من قبل الرحالة المسافرين عبر المنطقة .

٤-تسجيل النقوش :

استطاع اعضاء الفريق ان يسجلوا نقوش كهف واحد الى خمسة كهوف في اليوم الواحد وكان ذلك يعتمد على سهولة الوصول الى تلك المواقع وعدد النقوش الموجودة في كل موقع .

ان بعض النقوش باهتة وناقصة (انظر على سبيل المثال النقوش البالية في الشكل ٣) فهي تحتاج الى نظر شاقب لاكتشافها وفي بعض الاحيان كانت النقوش تستغرق وقتاً طويلاً للتمكن من قراءتها بشكل جيد .

ان تسجيل وتصوير النقوش الموجودة في الكهف الواحد يستغرق مدة ٤-٥ ساعات وقد تم نسخ كل نقش كما تم وضع مخطط لاشكالها المتقاربة وبعد ذلك تصويرها بالاسود والابيض وبعد ذلك بالشرائح الملونة مع اخذ صور منفصلة للقراءات الصعبة من النقوش وتم التقاط الصور بمقياس رسم ١٠ سم وذلك لاعطاء مؤشر عن حجم الحروف كما تم تسجيل ابعاد الكهف بالتقريب واتجاهه و تم وضع كل كهف على خارطة .

٥- النقوش :

ففي بعض الكهوف سجل فريق المشروع نقشا واحدا فقط وفي كهوف أخرى تم تسجيل ٤٠ نقشا ومن المحتمل ان تكون تلك النقوش هي نسبة صغيرة من النقوش التي كانت موجودة أصلا . اما النقوش الأخرى فقد اندثرت نتيجة للتآكل والسكنى بالكهف .

تمت كتابة النقوش على جدران الكهوف وفي بعض الأحيان على اسطح غير مستوية أو في حفرة صغيرة وكذلك على اسقف الكهوف وفي بعض الأحيان نجدها مكتوبة في نفس المنطقة من الكهف بل تكون منتشرة في أماكن عديدة منه .

وقد تم صبغ النقوش التي عثر عليها باللون الاسود والاحمر وفي بعض الأحيان بلون بني . ولم يتم العثور الا على نقشين فقط محفورين في الصخر والكهوف احدهما كان نصا مكتوبا على شكل خدوش خفيفة . ومن ناحية أخرى ففي منطقة نجد والمناطق الصحراوية كانت جميع النقوش التي تم العثور عليها محفورة على الصخر بالمطرقة (انظر المثل في الشكل ٨) .

وخلال العمل في هذه المرحلة اتضح بانه تمت كتابة النقوش على نوعين في الكتابة ، اضافة الى ذلك فقد تم العثور على نقش واحد بالكتابة العربية الجنوبية القديمة ، و لأغراض هذا التقرير فانني سأطلق على النوعين من النقوش اسماء النقش الظفاري (١) والنقش الظفاري (٢) . ويمكن الاطلاع على مثل هذا النقش الظفاري (١) في الاشكال ٣ الى ٨ وعلى النقش الظفاري (٢) في الاشكال ٩ الى ١٠ ، أما الشكل ١٠ ب فهو مثال على النقوش للكتابتين القريبتين من بعضهما البعض .

ومن الكتابة بالنقش الظفاري (١) الموجودة في ٩٠ موقعا وجدها فريق المشروع في الجبل الشرقي فان ١٠ منها فقط تحتوي على نقش ظفاري (٢) بينما في المنطقة الغربية وجدت سبعة مواقع من بين تسعة مواقع تحتوي عليها هذه النقوش . وان وجود النسبة العالية منها في المنطقة الأخيرة لايعني بالضرورة بان تلك النقوش منتشرة أكثر في تلك المنطقة حيث انه في الوقت الحالي لم يتم البحث الا في منطقة صغيرة جدا بالمقارنة مع منطقة الجبل بكاملها .

ما زالت هذه النقوش تتطلب ترجمة صحيحة وتحليل كافٍ وذلك بالرجوع الى كتب المراجع والقواميس في بريطانيا ، و من الواضح ان كل النقوش هي عبارة عن اشكال من الكتابة السامية الجنوبية القديمة والتي كانت تستعمل في النقوش العربية الجنوبية القديمة كما كانت تستعمل في مختلف النقوش الأخرى قبل الاسلام والتي تم العثور عليها في شبه الجزيرة العربية ومن المحتمل ان تكون قد كتبت قبل حوالي ٢٠٠٠ سن ولكن وفي هذا الوقت فلا يوجد دليل على ذلك .

٦- الكتابات

انظر ادناه وذلك لمناقشة الكتابات

٧- خطة النشر

لقد تم انجاز الكثير من قبل فريق المشروع خلال الاسابيع القليلة الماضية وقد تم تسجيل الكثير من مجموعات النقوش و كان من الممكن الحصول على قراءة واضحة لاشكال الحروف وستشتمل المرحلة القادمة من اعمال المشروع على ما يلي :

ستتم طباعة ما يزيد عن ٢٥٠٠ صورة والتي تم التقاطها ثم سيتم تصنيفها وجدولتها وسيتم نسخ جميع النقوش من الصور لانتاج صور طبق الاصل واضحة وسيستمر العمل على حل نقوش الكتابة وسيتم ادخال النقوش في نظام الكمبيوتر ويتم تصنيفها وفهرستها . وننوي ان نكمل تقريراً مبدئياً خلال اشهر قليلة وسيكون جاهزاً للنشر وسيشتمل ذلك على الاعمال الميدانية وتقرير عن تطور العمل في فك الرموز والكتابة كما سيشمل ذلك وضع جداول لانواع الكتابة

وعلى المدى الطويل سيستمر العمل على اعداد النقوش لنشرها وسيشمل ذلك مراجعة النصوص اضافة الى مناقشات لغوية ووضع فهرس للاسماء والكلمات وسيتم كذلك نشر صور طبق الاصل والصور للنقوش وسيكون النشر تحت اسماء على بن احمد بن محاش والدكتورة جبرالدين كينج كما سيوجه الشكر الى وزارة الاعلام الموقرة واللجنة الوطنية للاشراف على مسح الاثار في السلطنة وغيرها من الجهات التي قدمت المساعدة .

٨- الاعمال الميدانية المستقبلية

في هذه المرحلة سجل المشروع معظم النقوش التي اكتشفها الفاضل علي محاش ويؤمل ان تستمر اللجنة الوطنية للاشراف على مسح الاثار في سلطنة عمان في البحث عن نقوش وان يمتد عملها الى الجبل الغربي والمناطق الصحراوية . وفي حالة وجود مرحلة اخرى من العمل الميداني يتولاه مشروع النقوش في ظفار فانه يطلب الى وزارة الاعلام الموقرة التكرم بتوفير ما يلي :

- ١- اجراء الترتيبات اللازمة لاستصدار تأشيرة دخول للدكتورة جبرالدين كينج ومساعد لها .
- ٢- تذاكر سفر لندن - صلالة - لندن للدكتورة جبرالدين كينج ومساعد لها .
- ٣- سكن ومعيشة وسيارة ذات دفع اربعة عجلات طوال مدة المرحلة وللعمل في المناطق النائية . ويكون من الضروري وجود سيارتين من هذا النوع تحوّلًا لأي حادث .
- ٤- توفير الخرائط اللازمة
- ٥- تذاكر سفر صلالة - لندن - صلالة لحضور الفاضل علي محاش المناقشات الاستشارية في بريطانيا وذلك بخصوص المطبوع .

٩- توصيات لتدريب موظفين للعمل في ابحاث النقوش
ان النقوش التي اكتشفها وسجلها فريق المشروع هي اضافة هامة جداً للتراث العماني ومن المحتمل ان تمثل نسبة صغيرة من المواد المتعلقة بالنقش التي يترتب العثور عليها في المنطقة الجنوبية ، ومن المهم في هذه المرحلة ان تبدأ اللجنة الوطنية بوضع الخطط لتدريب الموظفين العمانيين لمباشرة اعمال تسجيل ونشر هذه النقوش .

ويترتب رفع بعض الملاحظات العامة حول نوعية الموظفين المطلوبين لمباشرة اعمال الابحاث من هذا النوع ، فعلى المستوى التعليمي فان اصعب ناحية من نواحي العمل تتضمن ساعات طويلة من التسجيل والتصنيف والجدولة للمواد وتجهيزها للنشر وهذا يتضمن العمل لعدة ساعات على افراد كما ان ذلك يتطلب الصبر والاجتهاد . اما الشخص الذي يتوقع نتائج سريعة فهو لا يصلح للعمل . ان هذا النوع من البحث غالباً ما يتضمن العمل في المناطق النائية وتحت ظروف قاسية ، لذا يترتب على المرشحين للقيام بهذا العمل ان يكونوا مناسبين من ناحية جسمانية ومستعدين للعمل في الخلاء وتحت حرارة مرتفعة ورياح قوية .

علماء النقوش
يجب ان يؤهل المرشحون للحصول على شهادة الماجستير وكذلك الدكتوراة كما يترتب على المرشحين ان يتقنوا اللغة الجبالية و ان يكونوا على معرفة جيدة باللغة العربية . كما يجب ان يتمتعوا بقدرات لغوية جيدة حيث ان الدراسة تتطلب استعمال اللغات الانجليزية والفرنسية والالمانية والمعرفة باساسيات اللغات السامية الاخرى ، كما يجب ان يكون لديهم اهتمامات بالتاريخ والاثار . ولتسجيل النقوش يجب ان تكون لديهم المقدرة في التقاط التفاصيل ورسم نسخ دقيقة كما يترتب على المرشحين ان يكونوا على استعداد لحضور دورة في التصوير الفوتوجرافي حيث انه من المهم لهم ان تكون الصور التي يتم العمل بها قد التقطت من قبل نفس الشخص الذي يقرأ ويؤلف النقوش .

الارشيف والمكتبة
سيخلق العمل الميداني كمّاً هائلاً من المعلومات والصور التي يترتب تصنيفها وفهرستها في مكتب مركزي ، لذا يترتب تدريب شخص على اعمال المكتبة بحيث يصبح على معرفة باحتياجات و ادارة المكتبة .

المصور
من المهم ان يكون للجنة الوطنية مختبر تصوير خاص بها ويترتب بناء على ذلك ، تدريب شخص على اعمال التصوير بما في ذلك اساليب التحميض والطباعة .

المساح
يترتب ان يكون هناك موظف مدرب على استعمال الخرائط واعمال المسح بحيث تتمكن اللجنة الوطنية من وضع مخططات للمواقع .

الموظفون الميدانيون
ان الاشخاص الذين يعرفون جيداً مختلف المناطق في المنطقة الجنوبية يجب ان يتم اختيارهم للعمل كأدلاء والمساعدة في البحث عن النقوش .